SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SAMBHAJI RAO SHINDE :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have decided to impose quota on agricultural products and essential commodities export to Russia under the 'debt repayment mechanism', if so, what are the details thereof ;

(b) whether there is any plan to earn hard currency by exporting surplus commodities to Russia beyond this 'debt repayment mechanism' if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether it is a act that an inter-bank agreement has been signed between Russian Central Bank and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) banning third-party trading of products exported under this mechanism and if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) No Sir. However, various aspects of 'debt repayment mechanism' which is of a recent origin are being continuously reviewed and evolved, in line with the relevant understandings between India and Russia.

(b) No Sir. However, trade between the two countries is possible both in hard currency and as per the 'debt repayment mechanism'.

(c) The Reserve Bank of India and the Bank for Foreign Economic Affairs of the USSR signed an inter-bank agreement in September 1993 pertaining to the banking procedures in connection with the 'debt repayment mechanism'.

CHANGES IN CENTRAL EXCISE AND CUSTOMS RELATING TO EXPORTS

2354. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Union Finance Minister has announced and assured the exporters that all existing irritants and bottlenecks with Central Excise and customs relating to exports will be removed;

(b) if so, to what extent this will satisfy the exporters ;

(c) whether exporters have also made any suggestions for removing the hurdles ; and

(d) if so, how many of them have been removed so far ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) to (b) The Finance Minister has been emphasising in his meetings with various trade associations the need to improve our export performance wherein it has also been observed by him that any irritants and bottlenecks with regard to central excise and customs relating to exports would be removed. Suggestions are received from time to time from individuals as also from the various exporting organisations for simplification of customs and central excise procedures. The suggestions so received are considered and action taken to simplify the procedures. Review of customs and excise procedures is a continuous exercise.

U.S. RESTRICTIONS ON IMPORT OF GOODS INVOLVING CHILD LABOUR

2355. SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) what are the effects on our export to USA on items like carpets etc. because of the restrictions imposed by U.S.A. on import of goods in whose manufacture child labour was involved ; and

(b) what steps have been taken to check the adverse effect on our export items by seeking concessions from U.S.A. and exploring alternate market ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a)